

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

Minutes of the virtual meeting held on 8 June 2021

PRESENT: Mrs Annwen Morgan (Chief Executive) (Chair)

Councillor Llinos M Huws (Leader & Portfolio Holder for Social Services)
Councillor Alun Mummery (Portfolio Member for Housing and Supporting Communities)
Councillor R Meirion Jones (Portfolio Member for Education, Libraries, Culture and Youth)
Councillor Margaret M Roberts (Partnership and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee)
Barbara Jones (Anglesey Foster Carers' Association)
Liz Fletcher (Assistant Area Director West – Children, BCUHB)
Fôn Roberts (Director of Social Services)
Rhys H Hughes (Director of Education, Skills and Young People)
Ned Michael (Head of Housing Services)
Huw Owen (Independent Reviewing & Safeguarding Officer),
Gwyneth Hughes (Senior Education Well-being Manager)
Saul Ainsworth (Interim Service Manager – Safeguarding)
Llinos Edwards (Looked After Children's Nurse)
Mairwen Hughes (Committee Officer)

APOLOGIES: Councillor Richard Griffiths (Corporate Scrutiny Committee)
Heulwen Owen (LAC Education Liaison Officer)
Dawn Owen and Nia Hardaker (Independent Reviewing Officers)
Keith Walters (Child Placement Team Manager)

1 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

No declaration of interest was received.

2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the previous meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held on 16 March, 2021 were presented and confirmed as correct.

3 MATTERS ARISING

- **Pathway Plans**

An update was provided by the Independent Reviewing and Safeguarding Officer on the progress made in terms of the quality of Pathway Planning including the provision and content within the Plans. It was noted that in the report submitted to the Corporate Parenting Panel on 16 March, 2021 referred that the *'Post-16 Pathway Plan: The Independent Reviewing Officers feel that practice needs to be improved* in this area, with the plan being co-produced with the young person, and to include information

about strengths, skills to be progressed, opportunities, contingency plans, actions and timescales.'

The Independent Reviewing and Safeguarding Officer referred to the requirement as set out in Part 6 of the Code of Practice Social Service and Well-being Act (Wales) 2014. Paragraph 53 and 54 of the Act states that:-

' Paragraph 53 - When a looked after child is about to turn 16, the local authority must prepare a pathway plan to assist that young person with the transition to adulthood and leaving care. The pathway plan will build upon the child's existing Part 6 care and support plan, which will be subsumed within the pathway plan.'

'Paragraph 54 – The pathway plan will capture the actions which will be necessary from the local authority, the young person's carer, young person, parent and other identified parties to assist the young person to make a successful transition from care. The pathway plan will continue once the young person turns 18. The pathway assessment and planning process should also determine and record what information, advice and assistance should be provided for the young person as they prepare for, and once they have left care.'

The Independent Reviewing and Safeguarding Officer also referred to Paragraph 440 (a) of the Act which was included within the report. He noted that a sample of 20 Pathway Plans were reviewed out of 24 eligible pathway plans for young persons. Two of the pathway plans templates had not been completed as both young persons refused to engage with the Social Workers in their preparation.

He further referred to the strengths and matters for development :-

Strengths:-

- A total of 10 were considered to be thorough and detailed Pathway Plans;
- There was evidence of co-production with young people in most cases;
- Attempts had been made to capture the 'voice' of the young person through e.g. using their own words in all the plans;
- There were evidence of regularly updating in 12 of the Pathway Plans;
- One plan clearly set out what the different response would be by Children and Families Service depending on the path the young person would chose to follow;
- The views of young persons is included in all the Pathway Plans;
- In two cases, it is said the young person does not like contributing to LAC Reviews but these person's views are heard through the Pathway Plan;
- Views of parent were included in 6 of the Pathway Plans.

Matters for development:

- There is little evidence of contingency planning;
- At times, various sections of the plan has been updated whilst others have not e.g. comments in one section may refer to a young person being in school, but there is reference to attending college in a different section. This may be due to the templates being unwieldy and repetitive. This raises questions about the quality assurance process and managerial confirmation of the plans;
- Many of the individual boxes in all the Pathway Plans are empty as all questions are not answered. This is particularly true of questions such as 'where do I want to be/how important is this for you?';

- At times, there are references to developing independent living skills, however little detail is provided on which skills there are and which are to be prioritised.
- Some Social Workers have cited the lack of willingness by young people to engage *as a reason for not being able to produce more detailed plans. This raises questions* as to whether the social work intervention is sufficiently creative, as well as sufficiently mindful of the difficulties some of the young people have experienced;
- It is important Pathway Plans are formed in a timely manner;
- Some Social Workers have commented on 16 year old young people being overwhelmed by the sections which refer to independent living post-18.
- The “scoring” (i.e expressing their feelings on a scale of 1 to 10) is only liked by two young people within this sample.
- In two cases, gauging the appropriate time to undertake the work was said to be a factor. One young person who refused to engage last year was now said to be keen to engage. This may require further consideration: not all young people will be ready at the time when the Pathway Plan has to be commenced.
- The Pathway Plan template does not include a space to record the name of the relative/foster carer who is looking after the young person. This is often included in the space provided for the placement’s address. This leads to first names only often being recorded.

The Independent Reviewing and Safeguarding Officer further reported that comments has been received from the Specialist Children’s Services which noted that the pathway plan is not in an ‘easy read’ format for children with learning disabilities (and learning difficulties) and scoring is not user friendly for children with learning disability, numeracy difficulties and may have no meaning if they have no concept of numbers.

He further said that as Independent Reviewing and Safeguarding Officers it is considered that the progress is consistently made by the Children and Families Service to form a Pathway Plan for all eligible young people. It also concluded that the amount of detail within the plans has improved over time. The impact of the pandemic should also be considered as opportunities for Social Workers to meet young people face to face to discuss their aspirations have been limited.

The Panel thanked the Independent Reviewing and Safeguarding Officer for the report and raised the following matters:-

- The Chair ascertained as to when it is anticipated that the pathway plans are to be amended and when the recommendations within this report as to be implemented.

The Director of Social Services responded that the adaptations to the forms has been highlighted within the Teams timetable and to take place within Quarter 3. As it has been noted by the Independent Reviewing and Safeguarding Officer the forms have been formed around the requirements of the legislation. A detailed input will be given by the Interim Service Manager in Quarter 3 but substantial work will be required to reduce these forms to capture key information.

- It was expressed that it must be taken into account that the development of young people, especially between the ages of 15 to 18 is different in each individual. Questions were raised as to whether the pathway plans are timely within this particular age group.

The Independent Reviewing and Safeguarding Officer responded that this matter has been raised and Social Workers have said that 2 individual who were eligible to take part in the pathway process had refused to engage in the process at the time but following a period of 12 months these individual have now agreed to fill the pathway plans. He agreed that young people's aspirations change and their wishes must be taken into account. The pathway templates have been developed to include all the legislative requirements but it is evident that these templates are extensive. The Director of Social Services said that it is an intention that all the necessary forms will be reviewed over Quarter 3 but reducing the amount of paper work will need to be balanced against the legislative requirements in case a legal challenge is faced by the Authority;

- Reference was made to the comments received by the Specialist Children Service, which is noted within the report, that some young people with learning disabilities and numeracy difficulties would have difficulties with completing such templates. Questions were raised to the support available to these young people when they reach 18 years of age.

The Director of Social Services responded that the Specialist Children Service work closely with the young people and their families with regard to learning and numeracy difficulties. Some of the young people attend Canolfan Y Bont and others attend mainstream schools; the Specialist Children Service have specialist tools in communicating with these young people. The Looked After Children's Nurse expressed that training for carers is also essential as to how the pathway plans are completed so as the 'voice' and requirements of these young people are monitored.

It was RESOLVED:-

- **That the template should be reconsidered in co-production with young people;**
 - **The template should include a space for the names of the carers;**
 - **Pathway Plans should be updated annually, or when there are any significant changes to the plan e.g. starting in college;**
 - **The views of persons who have Parental Responsibility for the young people, and the views of other professionals, should be consistently recorded;**
 - **Pathway Plans should consistently be formed in a timely manner.**
- **SGO policy in relation to a no detriment approach**

The Interim Service Manager – Safeguarding reported that this matter relates to the barriers that the Authority's Foster Carers are faced if a Care Order was to be discharged and a Special Guardianship Order was applied. He noted that following discussions with the Director of Social Service a decision has been made that a no detriment policy should be considered as it would encourage people to apply for the Special Guardianship Order. It is anticipated that the no detriment policy will be reviewed and adapted in the coming months.

It was agreed to accept and to note the update.

- **Improving the quality of assessments**

The Interim Service Manager – Safeguarding reported that the Panel had raised at its last meeting as to how the Service intends to address the quality of assessments as regards to Part 6 Care and Support Plan template. The Service has reviewed the contents of the document to ensure that it meets the requirements of the Social Service

and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014. He further noted that the Independent Reviewing Officers audit the quality assurance of the plan by each individual case. The Director of Social Services noted that an audit will be undertaken by internal practitioners and will be included within the Service's work plan.

It was agreed to accept and to note the update.

4 EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING OF LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN DURING AND AFTER A PANDEMIC

Submitted – a report by the Interim Service Manager – Safeguarding on the emotional well-being of looked after children during and after the pandemic.

The Interim Service Manager – Safeguarding reported that the impact upon the general population of the pandemic has been considerable across a range of issues, inclusive of individual's emotional and mental health. The impact on upon children the Authority is responsible for as corporate parenting has also been significantly affected aside from those children placed with parents, looked after children are already separated from parents/carers and potentially other family members, in particular siblings. The closure of schools has further impacted upon looked after children and increased the sense of isolation. However, many of the children have benefited from support from within the Council to attend the Hwb Gofal (Care Hubs) and there are now 26 trained 'trauma informed' schools. Each secondary school has the added benefit of a school counsellor and some teaching assistants have benefited from training to become Emotional Literacy Support Assistant Practitioners via an educational psychologist.

At the end of April 2021, there were 157 children cared for by the Authority. Younger children, whilst capable of exhibiting signs of emotional instability, are more likely to require consistent nurturing parenting (e.g. within foster care) in the first instance, rather than targeted/specialist emotional or mental health services. This report does not consider children under the age of eight years old on the basis that they are less likely to be referred targeted or specialist services. A questionnaire was sent to each Social Worker with responsibility for each of the 100 children aged 8 years old; 62 replies were received and relevant services were also contacted to consider the nature of their service delivery during the pandemic. 30 (48%) of children and young people in this cohort of 62 exhibited signs of emotional distress which required a targeted or specialist intervention. There is evidence that each of the 30 children has suffered adverse childhood experiences and there is clear evidence that at least 6 of the children and young people have experienced increased symptoms of emotional distress on account of the restrictions placed upon them during the pandemic.

It was noted that multi-agencies have adapted well with the delivery of their services with virtual methods of communication. However, it has been reported that virtual meetings with children in respect of development and maintaining relationships has suffered as people who suffer emotional distress benefit from face to face contact.

The Panel thanked the Interim Service Manager – Safeguarding for the report and raised the following matters:-

- Questions raised whether there should be concerns that only 62% responded to the questionnaire sent out to monitor the well-being of looked after children during the pandemic.

The Director of Social Services responded that children are unable to be forced to complete such questionnaires but he emphasised that there is constant contact with the young people;

- Reference was made to the 26 trained 'trauma informed' schools and questions were as to whether these are schools across the Island.

The Senior Well-being Manager – Education responded that staff within the 26 schools have undertaken an intensive 10 day diploma course. She noted that these courses are limited in number that are able to attend. A half-day course also has been afforded with around 500 teachers and teaching assistants attending. It was also noted that 5 Foster Carers have also attended the course which has been benefited in enabling to understand children and young people's health and mental health.

The Director of Social Services said that his aspirations is to identify the Authority as a 'Trauma Informed Island' and he welcomed the achievement that 26 schools has undertaken this course with over 500 teachers and teaching assistants attending. He noted that a similar course can be added to the Elected Members Training Programme in the future.

The Director of Education, Skills and Young People said when the closure of schools was forced due to the pandemic, educational care centres was available across the Island and every vulnerable child was afforded to attend these centres.

- The Leader referred to children under the age of 8 who are looked after children by the Authority and questioned as to how the service is to identify these children's circumstances and the services they required.

The Interim Service Manager – Safeguarding said that looked after children under the age of 8 needs stability and it is important that the Authority's Foster Carers are trained and supported.

The Director of Social Services said it must be considered that no every child in care needs the support of external agencies and can be supported through the universal services. Play activities, arts and crafts and sporting activities have been afforded.

It was agreed to accept the report and to receive an update report in six months to inform the Panel on the activities afforded to looked after children.

5 SERVICE REPORTS

- **Education progress of Anglesey Authority's looked after pupils**

The Senior Education Well-being Manager reported that the report concentrates on the educational year 2020/21. It was noted that there were 136 looked after pupils of 3 – 16 year old statutory education age with 22 over the age of 16. 95 looked after children are located across Anglesey schools with 41 school aged looked after children are place outside the county. During the pandemic, looked after children were offered access to a care hub at school with the schools using a range of interventions to support pupils who lack engagement and to return by working with partnerships to deliver individual plans. The use of the looked after children bursary grant has allowed all schools this year to access the BOXALL assessment scheme. This is a resource that allows schools to measure a pupil's emotional needs and offer interventions that are in line with the needs. The Learning and Children and Families Departments have

recently initiated an online PEP (personal education plan) pilot and if this pilot scheme is successful, online PEP will be operational in all schools from September onwards. The advantage of an electronic PEP for the Learning Department is that it is a more effective way of tracking the progress and supply of looked after children. Schools continue to apply their understanding of early trauma by following a Trauma Informed Schools diploma course. Access to laptops and chrome books has been very important over the past year for all pupils.

It was further noted that most of Year 11 looked after children have received a further education placement at a college, received an apprenticeship or are returning to sixth form. However, a small percentage find it difficult to plan for the next stage but tutors and other specialists offer intensive support.

The Panel considered the report and raised points as follows:-

- The Panel expressed strongly that as they have a Corporate Parenting responsibility they must need assurance that each looked after child reach their potential and are on track with their educational needs.

The Senior Education Well-being Manager responded that once the PEP is in place within the schools it will be easier to gauge and monitor the progress the needs of the individual child in respect of age and ability and are on track in respect of their personal targets.

- Reference was made that 41 looked after children are placed outside the county and assurance is needed these looked after children receive the same opportunities as other children on the Island.

The Director of Social Services responded that an report can be submitted to the next meeting of this Panel in respect of data where the pupils are located out of county. He noted that placement of looked after children out of county must be reported quarterly to Welsh Government and permission is required when a child is placed outside Wales.

It was agreed to note the report and to receive data as to the looked after children who are place out of county by the December meeting of this Panel.

- **LAC Placement Team Manager**

The report of the Child Protection Team was presented for the Panel's consideration.

The Director of Social Services referred to data for placement types for Looked After Children from 2018 to 2021 to the Panel as follows:-

- 160 children and young people are in care at the end of March 2021 in comparison to 158 in March 2020.
- There has been a notable decline in the use of outside agencies;
- There has been a shift in the type of placements the Authority can offer for children and young people.

The contributing factors to how this has been achieved is more appropriate matching; Cartrefi Clyd has taken placements in the last 12 to 18 month period; Specialist Foster Carers joining – Mother and Child Foster Carers and the increase

in Foster Carers being assessed and approved by the Authority. In March 2021 there were 108 individuals registered as Foster Carers and more young people staying with their connected families. There are 36 mainstream fostering households and 28 connected persons fostering households. The Director of Social Services further said that the Children's and Adult Services will receive an Assurance Inspection by Care Inspectorate Wales at the week beginning 14 June, 2021 and the Child Placement Team will contribute to this inspection.

It was noted that the Child Placement Team has seen a staff turnaround with staff leaving for other posts and leaving the Authority. Therefore, a new model of a Practice Leader, 5 FTE Social Workers, a Recruitment and Placement Officer and two Support Workers will be put in place for the Child Placement Team so as to assure stability within the Team.

The Regional Fostering Team Managers of all six North Wales Local Authorities continue to meet regularly in order to address the current issues facing Local Authorities in recruiting new and maintain current Foster Carers. The 'Maethu Cymru' national recruiting drive will continue and is likely to bring a number of new Fostering enquiries and it is hoped that it will turn into full assessments and provide more Foster Carers.

The Panel considered the report and made the following points:-

- The Panel wished to congratulate the work of the Child Placement Team for the work achieved in attracting Foster Carers. Questions were raised to the ability to attract Welsh speakers as Foster Carers. The Panel considered that it was imperative that Welsh speaking Looking After Children be placed with Foster Carers that can speak Welsh.

The Panel was advised that the Authority has attracted Welsh speaking families as Foster Carers and will endeavour to support and encourage any Foster Carer who wishes to learn Welsh. It is hoped that the National Campaign will help in attracting Welsh speakers becoming Foster Carers.

It was agreed to accept the report.

6 NEXT MEETING

The arrangements for the next scheduled meeting of the Panel at 10.00 a.m., on Tuesday, 7 September, 2021 were noted.

The meeting concluded at 12.00 pm

**MRS ANNWEN MORGAN
CHAIR**